

Guiding Framework for Off-Highway Vehicle Management on the Mt. Hood National Forest

Preamble

Roads constructed to support decades of timber harvesting on the Mt. Hood National Forest (the Forest) has created an extensive legacy road system, which spans approximately 3,383 miles. Maintaining this vast road system has largely been funded by Congressional appropriations for timber sales. However, as timber harvesting has been reduced from 370 million board feet in 1990 to about 25 million board feet today, road maintenance funding has dramatically reduced as well. While reduced timber traffic has reduced maintenance needs, the maintenance needs associated with recreation and weather have not decreased. With the continued deterioration of the Forest's transportation system coupled with greatly diminished finances, we have been forced to make tough administrative decisions to reduce maintenance needs.

In order to better manage the Forest's transportation system, we have embarked on several planning processes that address travel and access management. This project – aimed specifically at managing off-highway vehicles (OHVs) – is just one of these planning processes. We have also embarked on an aquatic restoration planning process, in which we will review approximately 20 percent of the existing road system each year to identify roads to decommission or close. Also, the Forestwide *Roads Analysis* (2003), which assessed the environmental risks, access needs, and costs of roads, will inform all decisions related to achieving a minimum road system needed for safe and efficient travel and for managing the Forest lands (FSH 7709.55, Chpt 20 (January 8, 2009)). In the end, these efforts, along with future efforts, will systematically lead us to achieving our end goal of having a manageable, responsible transportation system.

This project focuses on OHV management across the Forest with the goal of designating roads, trails and areas for OHV use by class of OHV and time of year. We developed the following principles to guide the project and achieve this goal.

Guiding Principles

- The Forest will designate an OHV system that will set the stage for future access management decisions.
- The Forest recognizes that honoring relationships with other government agencies is a vital condition for the long-term success of managing OHV recreation on the Forest.
- The OHV system designated should reflect that the Mt. Hood National Forest is not a key OHV recreation destination in the Pacific Northwest.
- The safety of all visitors to the Forest, including motorized and non-motorized recreationalists, is an important consideration in designating OHV roads, trails and areas.